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President: Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Agenda item 25 (*continued*)

United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations

Report of the Secretary-General (A/56/523)

Draft resolution (A/56/L.3)

The President: At this meeting of the General Assembly, we are discussing what the United Nations should and can do to promote understanding and dialogue among civilizations. The General Assembly, recognizing that this question is closely bound up with issues of peace and security, economic prosperity and human rights — which are central to the work of our Organization — has taken up and considered the item since the fifty-third session in 1998.

Since then, the General Assembly has adopted several important resolutions regarding this item and the Secretary-General has reported on the implementation of the resolutions. However, as we near the end of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, I believe it is appropriate and timely for the General Assembly to provide a strong impetus for further progress in this vital area. In particular, we expect that the draft resolution entitled "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations" will be adopted by consensus after today's debate. It is my view that the global agenda, if adopted, will mark a milestone in our efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations.

Over the course of millennia, humankind has developed and nurtured a wealth of cultures and civilizations. From the beginning of history, they have interacted with and enriched each other, while contributing to the progress of humankind as a whole. As globalization accelerates and is driven forward by advanced technologies, the process of cultural interaction and exchange is also accelerating.

The United Nations designated the year 1995 as the United Nations Year for Tolerance and proclaimed 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Indeed, tolerance and dialogue should be included among the core values of the international community. Without them, peace and security cannot be achieved and would hardly be worth achieving. Moreover, they are instrumental to the pursuit of human rights and human freedom.

We find ourselves at a critical juncture in history. Along with the advent of the age of globalization, terrorism has now surfaced as the major threat to international peace and security. Terrorism represents the very embodiment of intolerance. All great civilizations and religions in history have preached tolerance and compassion. Dialogue among civilizations, by promoting tolerance, undermines the basis of terrorism and thus contributes to global peace and security.

In our globalizing and increasingly interconnected world, diverse cultures can provide a needed source of stability and continuity. The challenge is to balance this need against the risk of

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cultural stagnation. There is no simple solution, but we must always remember that cultures are living, evolving entities, not lifeless artefacts. I hope that this is one of many important lessons that the dialogue has taught us.

In this regard, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the eminent persons from all over the world who have come here to address this Assembly. I thank them very much. I have no doubt that their presentations will do much to make this dialogue one of the United Nations foremost contributions to cross-cultural understanding.

In closing, let me express my gratitude to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for its initiative in proposing this agenda item. I wish all the participants a very productive and successful dialogue, thus advancing the goals and ideals for which the United Nations stands.

I call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: It is a special pleasure for me to join the General Assembly for a debate on a subject of profound moral and political significance to the United Nations. If ever one doubted the need for a dialogue among civilizations, let them doubt no longer. 11 September made the need for such a dialogue crystal-clear.

That is why our response — the response of the United Nations — must be to bring nations, cultures and civilizations ever closer together through dialogue and cooperation. Throughout history, civilizations have grown and flourished through dialogue and exchange, learning from other cultures and finding new inspiration to pursue knowledge and understanding.

The dialogue among civilizations is a central pillar of the global response to conflict and violence of every kind, particularly when it is based on bigotry and intolerance. With this dialogue taking place in every part of the world, appeals to war will be met with appeals to compromise. Hatred will be met with tolerance. Violence will be met with resolve. A dialogue among civilizations is humanity's best answer to humanity's worst enemies.

I wish to pay tribute to President Khatami of Iran for launching the dialogue among civilizations within the United Nations and to other leaders and Governments who have sustained this dialogue over the last year. By doing so, they have not only advanced an essential vehicle of understanding, but served the noblest aims of the United Nations. Over the last year, the idea of a dialogue among civilizations has engendered wide interest in academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and wherever people have sought to find common ground.

From Austria to Costa Rica to Egypt, Mali, Korea and many other countries, Governments and civil society have joined United Nations agencies in advancing this dialogue and bringing its message to every culture and continent. A special contribution has been made by the Group of Eminent Persons, as the President has indicated, and I would like to congratulate them on their service to humanity and to the United Nations. I thank them very much.

The dialogue among civilizations is based not on the premise that we, as humanity, are all the same or always in agreement, but rather on appreciation of the fact that we represent a diversity of cultures and that our beliefs reflect this diversity. The idea that there is one people in possession of the truth, one answer to the world's ills, or one solution to humanity's needs has done immense harm throughout history. We need look no further than the composition of this great Assembly to know — as an unmistakable, incontrovertible fact of life — that there are many ways of living, many beliefs, many cultures.

It is when this diversity of identities is under siege, when a way of life is denied, when the basic freedom to live as one chooses is threatened, that conflict, violence and suffering become inevitable.

The dialogue among civilizations, in this sense, is not an expression of hopes, but a reflection of the world as it is. Diversity is the basis for the dialogue among civilizations and the reality that makes dialogue necessary. We understand as never before that, however diverse we are, we are fully human and fully worthy of the respect and dignity that are essential to our common humanity.

We recognize that we are the products of many cultures and memories; that tolerance allows us to study and learn from other cultures; that our strengths lie in combining the familiar with the foreign; and that those who perceive diversity as a threat deny themselves and their societies the best of humanity.

All of us have the right to take pride in our particular faith or heritage. But the notion that what is

"ours" is necessarily in conflict with what is "theirs" is both false and dangerous. In contrast to what some would suggest, we can love what we are without hating what we are not.

Of course, there are often profound and very real issues of self-determination, security and dignity at stake in the relations between peoples. Words alone will not resolve them. But a dialogue of words and deeds — that is, of reciprocal actions based on respect and a genuine understanding of the other side's grievances — can resolve disputes and prevent conflict.

I am not saying that this dialogue will be easy. But we must not allow the difficulties we will face to deter us from pursuing it. I am convinced that it can make a genuine difference in the lives of ordinary men and women throughout the world. Ultimately, that is the standard by which this dialogue will be measured: its ability to help alleviate suffering and protect the fundamental human rights of future generations.

The dialogue among civilizations has a purpose and promise beyond the challenges we face today. Throughout history, such dialogue has fostered understanding and compromise, and can do so to an even greater extent in a world that is ever smaller and more closely linked. It can support and sustain every effort at peace and every attempt to resolve conflicts between and within nations.

It is my hope that, in the months and years ahead, all nations will join this dialogue and make it genuinely valuable by placing it at the service of the weakest and most vulnerable of our world: the victims of intolerance, bigotry and hatred. It is for their sake that the dialogue among civilizations must succeed.

President Khatami (Islamic Republic of Iran) (*spoke in Persian; English text provided by the delegation*): In the circle of those who cherished rational thinking 2,500 years ago, Socrates would employ the method of dialogue to discuss philosophical questions. Those who, unlike the philosophers, felt less love for wisdom yet showed more passion to possess it — that is, the sophists — did all they could to defeat Socrates, and when his life was found to contradict their interests and credibility, they eventually had him put to death.

The call to dialogue, however, did not die with Socrates. In places of learning and places of worship, as well as in forums on world politics and culture, we can still hear Socrates inviting us to dialogue. That appeal transcends realms of formal learning and philosophy, for Socrates was more than a philosopher. He was, indeed, a great mentor of morality and a master of culture and politics. It is precisely for this reason that dialogue presupposes and embodies a principled moral discipline of culture and politics.

Today, as in ancient centuries, engagement in dialogue requires wisdom, discipline and goodwill. Today, as then, any exclusive claim to absolute truth needs to be relinquished. Truth, as absolute as it is in its essence, should drive us, in the light of its true unity, not only to recognize plurality in human culture, religion, language and race, but also to embrace this variety as a unique opportunity for establishing peace, freedom and justice in our world. In order to do this, we will need to stop playing deaf. Devastating wars have always erupted when one party has refused to listen to what others have had to say.

When Iran proposed the idea of dialogue among civilizations in the General Assembly, few foresaw how soon this proposal could be so instrumental in saving the world from an imminent war of carnage and devastation. The horrific terrorist attacks on the United States of 11 September were perpetrated by a cult of fanatics who had mutilated their own ears and tongues and were able to communicate with perceived opponents only through carnage and devastation. A perceived need for revenge, coupled with a misplaced sense of might, could lead to failure to hear the calls of people of goodwill and the cries of children, women and the elderly in Afghanistan, whose lot in life has been no more than to suffer a prolonged death in the shadow of perpetual horror, hunger and disease.

In the opening years of the twentieth century, some prominent political thinkers rightly prophesied the imminence of a century of war and revolution. This was later attributed to the escalation of violence in the twentieth century, and violence was seen as a characteristic common to both wars and revolutions.

War, of course, is always concomitant with violence. But it would be incorrect to identify all revolutions with violence. One could cite examples of revolutions based on the very renunciation of violence. Apt consideration of the liberation movement in India should suffice to patently rebut such a claim. The Islamic revolution in Iran, which in a sense breathed

the soul of morality back into the body politic, was also a revolution that responded to bullets with flowers and did not combat its opponents exclusively with retaliation and revenge. It was the Government that emerged from our revolution that eventually, in the closing years of the twentieth century, proposed to the United Nations the idea of dialogue among civilizations.

I am grateful to this august body for embracing this proposal; to the Secretary-General and his Personal Representative for their invaluable efforts; and to the Group of Eminent Persons for its thought-provoking and insightful contribution in its recently published book, *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*.

I am also pleased to introduce, on behalf of the co-sponsors, the draft resolution (A/C.1/56/L.3), "Global agenda on the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, which has been prepared in a true spirit of dialogue. We hope that this important document receives the unanimous support of the General Assembly.

Regrettably, the dawn of the new millennium has turned out to be bloody and filled with gloom. The apparatus of terror and violence did not pause for a moment. A most brutal and appalling crime has been perpetrated against American civilians.

In the name of the people and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, I have firmly and unequivocally condemned this inhuman and anti-Islamic act of terror. I have already asked the Secretary-General of the United Nations to bring together heads of State to set an agenda for combating terrorism and to unify international political will in uprooting this evil phenomenon. This moment provides the most opportune time to reflect upon the causes and means of this catastrophe.

In our world today, the concept of political seclusion transgresses the boundaries of morality and falls into the realm of impossibility. All cultures, civilizations and faiths are now compelled to inhabit the same world by the inviolable verdict of technology. Now is therefore the best of times to bring about harmony and foster empathy amid diversity. A rare opportunity has now presented itself, which could lead either to interminable war or to enduring peace and compassion among human societies.

Terrorism is begotten through the ominous combination of blind fanaticism and brute force, and it always serves a systematized illusion. In spite of the propaganda it utilizes and the nomenclature it employs, terrorism is nothing more than a projection of the destructive forces of the human unconscious.

Should human beings be deprived of compassion and divested of morality, religious spirituality, a sense of aesthetics and the ability to engage in poetic visualization, and should they become incapable of experiencing death and destruction through artistic creativity, then the horrendous hidden forces of the unconscious would wreak havoc, death and devastation upon the world of humanity.

Whoever chooses to reduce religion, art or science to a destructive weapon bears no other than an inimical relationship to them.

In the intellectual world of Iran and Islam, magnificent achievements attained in the realm of literature are all rooted deeply in the rich resources of the divine revelation and Islamic tradition. For instance, such an understanding of tradition would be expressed by a Muslim mystic saying:

> "From the East to the West, should any one man be hurt by a thorn in his finger or by a stone in his way, I would feel the pain. My heart would share the burden of any heart encumbered with chagrin."

In the same way, the essence of religious spirituality is expressed by a poet writing in the Zen tradition: "If I had had a black cloak large enough, I would have covered all the needy of the world."

Human beings are capable of unbounded love. This is shown in the Gospels, which present the love between neighbours as on par with the love of God. The Upanishads teach that the human soul, the lily of the heart, grows from the soil out of which all human beings have been created. Precisely because of the homogeneity of this common soil, which cannot be moulded by politics and geography, empathic dialogue among human beings is possible.

A Manichaean perspective on world geopolitics, which dualistically assumes one religion to be the source of light and the other the source of darkness, would have appalling political and security consequences. The ancient trick of "making enemies"

is a product of paranoid illusion, but its products are nonetheless real.

Another question remains to be elaborated: in what soil would the seed of enmity and the making of enemies grow and produce such unpalatable fruit? It is evident that the seed of infinite enmity grows well wherever infinite injustice is entrenched and begets utter despair and frustration. Politicians and military generals could simply attribute the recent catastrophe in the United States, as well as all terrorist atrocities and casualties in various regions, to the evil deeds of a certain State, group or religion. Yet this would simply amount to evading the question, not answering it. The correct answer to this question, like many other correct answers in philosophy and politics, has a long history. However, a long history does not provide a remedy in and of itself. We can hope to learn a new lesson from an old answer only if we are prepared to accept the verdict of fairness and justice.

Injustice is neither unknown to nor confined to particular communities. However, when injustice accumulates so much that it engenders despair and frustration, it turns into an explosive brew. Only when people are deprived of a right to life — merely life as survival, not even a good life of equality — do they become capable of perpetrating crimes of which they are the first victims. People should not be led into utter despair. I intend this not merely as humanitarian advice, but also as a precondition for social and political coexistence in a world in which our fates are inevitably intertwined. Even for those of us who have lost the capacity to have compassion for others, and whose motivation is based on self-love and an urge to survive, it remains imperative not to push others into the dark realm of frustration. A frustrated person may choose death as the only remedy of his predicament: his own death and the death of others. At least part of our minds and hearts need to be set free from the clutches of instrumental and utilitarian reason and be opened up to moral rationality and altruistic reason. In this way it should become possible to have compassion for others. Let us have compassion not only for ourselves but also for others. Let us have compassion for others within their own idiosyncratic realms. Having compassion for others means not coercing them to assimilate to us or to succumb to our values. Compassion should come unconditionally. The only condition is a mutual agreement to refrain from atrocity and violence.

Let us welcome any plea to refrain from violence and to embrace compassion. Let us welcome any call that prefers the voice of humanity over the noise of explosions. Let us welcome any party that invites us not to racism but to respect for the human race. Let us respect the fundamental right of all parties to exist.

Moral rationality, heartfelt compassion for others and the ability to share in both the sufferings and the happiness of other people have so far managed to sustain our world. Let us breathe into the solemn and dry body of politics the soul of morality and ethics, thereby making it humane. When it comes to enmity and revenge, let us be as inclined to remember as a mirror. A tall, clean, truthful mirror can reflect to infinity our own beauties and those of others. It is unwise to shatter the mirror.

Mr. Schüssel (Austria): Please allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and thank you for the leadership with which you are guiding this Assembly at a time of unprecedented challenges to the United Nations and its Member States. It is a particular honour for me to address the Assembly on a subject which, I believe, can significantly contribute to helping us find a convincing response to these terrible new challenges.

When the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran proposed the dialogue among civilizations in 1998, many of us immediately realized the importance of his initiative. But little did we know how urgent and topical this initiative would become within a very short time. At the time, most of us probably felt that this would be a longer-term exercise to bridge a gap that was becoming obvious as international leaders and academics were struggling to come to terms with a new set of paradigms for international relations in the post-cold-war period. While some believed in a model of clashing civilizations dividing the world along fault lines of religion and culture, others shared the view that globalization would erode the remaining differences between societies and lead to one global civilization.

The tragic events of 11 September, which took place in this remarkable city — the main Headquarters of the United Nations and often referred to as the hub of the world — stress the need to think beyond the traditional patterns of diplomacy. Faced with an enemy completely disregarding human values and clearly misusing religion to justify the unjustifiable, we must

also think — and act — beyond our current efforts to bring the terrorists to justice. We need to accentuate more clearly our common values, the fundamental principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We need to build upon these values a world of tolerance and mutual respect which, I hope, will eventually bring about peace and security and a genuine human rights culture in which the value and security of every human being are respected.

I remember well hearing the Secretary-General say, at a recent conference we organized in Salzburg, that for the first time in human history the values of human rights and democracy are globally accepted.

Today, I speak here as a European, as a Christian. I speak from my specific cultural background, as a concerned individual.

In these days, we are called upon to examine the value of the dialogue in our fight against terrorism: dialogue is the antithesis of hate and intolerance. It is my firm conviction that we can and shall use the Dialogue among Civilizations as a preventive tool against terrorism.

From the very outset, Austria warmly welcomed and supported the initiative to declare 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We hosted in Vienna the inaugural meeting of the Group of Eminent Persons established by the Secretary-General.

In August this year, we held the Salzburg Dialogue among Civilizations, and I had the pleasure to discuss with the Secretary-General and many other participants the role of the dialogue as a new paradigm of international relations.

Austria, a small country, has a long-standing tradition of promoting open and inclusive dialogue between religions. In the early 1990s, the Vienna Dialogue between Christianity and Islam was initiated, and many conferences were held. This initiative will continue next February with the Vienna Christian-Islamic Round Table.

Today, at the peak of the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, it is my pleasure to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have so actively contributed to its success — in particular to the Secretary-General, but also to his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, and to the Eminent Persons who authored the book *Crossing the Divide*, which we have just received.

Where do we go from here? The dialogue should be a dialogue between, as well as within, civilizations and societies. Its aim is better understanding, tolerance and respect for different opinions.

The principle of justice, for example, is a centrepiece of both the Bible and the Koran. Holy scriptures have played an essential role in the history of mankind for overcoming cases of injustice. In fact, one might argue that believing in God remains an empty phrase or even a blasphemy unless it includes the unshakeable insistence on justice, reconciliation and peace.

At a global level, justice must be a central aim both in the relationships among sovereign States and among individuals.

Can we close our eyes before the screaming injustice that in some parts of the world not even the most basic medical care is available, while in other parts fortunes are irresponsibly spent for marginal gains? Can we avoid the question of how to reach a fairer, more equal distribution of resources and chances in a globalized economy? Can we remain indifferent when confronted with the lack of hope and perspective on the part of the younger generation in many parts of the world, as a result of insufficient education and unemployment?

In order to reach all segments of society, we also have to make the dialogue more broad-based. In particular, we will have to aim for the children — our future. Boys and girls alike need a good education that teaches them the merits of mutual respect and solidarity. They should be able to grow up with a profound understanding of, and esteem for, diversity and plurality.

We also have to ensure greater involvement in the dialogue on the part of civil society and of the media. As a contribution, next year we will hold a seminar in Vienna on dialogue among civilizations and the role of the media.

Acts of violence, ethnic cleansing and terrorism are often rooted in the perception of diversity as a threat. That is why we must go beyond diplomatic circles and expert meetings and reach out to the hearts and minds of people, particularly young people, all

over the world. Let us use globalization to create a new awareness of togetherness and closeness among people.

Cultural diversity — far from being a threat — is enriching, both for individuals and for societies. Numerous examples throughout the centuries have proved that cultural exchange is beneficial for all involved. All of our civilizations are, in fact, the products of centuries of cultural interaction, and all civilizations continue to be influenced by each other. Civilizations are dynamic rather than static or monolithic entities.

Universality should not be mistaken for uniformity. Where uniformity denies diversity, universality is necessarily inclusive. This very forum — the United Nations — is built on universality and on diversity. Universality is no danger to cultural identity. On the contrary, the recognition of, and respect for, plurality is part of the universality that binds us together. It enables us to recognize differences and to consciously remove barriers. If focuses our minds on what is common to humanity — our shared values, which are embraced by different religions and societies.

Unity in diversity must be based on mutual respect, which transcends mere tolerance. As President Khatami so rightly stated in 1999 at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO),

> "If this dialogue is to truly open a new chapter in global international relations, it has to advance from a phase of passive tolerance to a phase of mutual assistance."

Learning from others deepens our self-recognition. The famous Islamic teacher Iqbal knew — as did Goethe, the European poet and thinker — that dialogue does not mean assimilation but recognition and acceptance of differences, respect of diversity, and creativity in their selection.

In our societies, we are often victims of negative stereotypes. Too often, these stereotypes are misused to create so-called *feindbilder*, a German word that means "images of enemies", in order to stabilize societies or political power bases. What we need, on the contrary, are positive images of neighbourhood and partnership. In a globalized world, on this common planet, we need to reduce negative images and energy and put our creativity to work so that we can appreciate one another.

Let us dismantle our images of confrontation. Let us carry out the strenuous task of listening, getting in touch with each other and learning from one another. Let us first start with honest questions, not with instant answers. Let us delve into the depths rather than remain on the surface of zeitgeist debates.

The Austrian Cardinal Christoph Schönborn once said:

> "In an increasingly complex world, individual conscience is ever more important. We have to sharpen our conscience and learn to listen to its voice carefully. Doomed are the people and the country where the voice of conscience is crushed."

Learning from each other means abandoning the idea of a single truth. Truth can never be claimed as the property of any specific culture or civilization. We can only endeavour to search for truth together — patiently and persistently.

In order to become part of global solutions ourselves, let us start with small but concrete steps. Let us take a bottom-up rather than top-down approach.

Cultural dialogue is one instrument that could help achieve this, through the creation of intercultural networks for religious, economic and ecological exchanges. Let us better appreciate the value of minorities. Let us defend them and actively work against their alienation and isolation. Let us also try to win over international media in our effort towards solidarity and tolerance, and let us invite religious leaders to join in a dialogue, especially those who are still sceptical or reluctant. We need visible symbols and personalities in the quest for global solidarity and compassion.

The dialogue among civilizations will lack credibility and conviction unless women from all cultures and traditions fully participate in their societies and in the global community. Their experiences, aspirations and dreams must become part and parcel of our dialogue.

The pre-eminent place for dialogue remains, of course, our United Nations itself. But we know that dialogue is not possible between institutions; only human beings can enter into a dialogue with readiness

and openness, talking not so much about others but about themselves.

At the meeting on the dialogue among civilizations held last autumn here in New York, Secretary-General Kofi Annan said:

> "Without this dialogue taking place every day among all nations — within and between civilizations, cultures and groups — no peace can be lasting and no prosperity can be secure." *(SG/SM/7526)*

This has never been never more true. It also illustrates why the United Nations and the Secretary-General received this year's Nobel Peace Price, and I wholeheartedly extend my congratulations once again.

Much has been said about globalization and fragmentation in a world that is still unsettled after the end of the stable but stifling bipolar model of the second half of the last century. We have seen terrible conflicts based on ethnic and religious differences, and we have been helpless in the face of hate on the part of the other, which, because of its inherent irrationality, defies all rational efforts at conflict resolution.

To my mind, the heart of dialogue consists of tolerance and acceptance of our respective otherness — not back to back, but face to face.

However, dialogue, cooperation and understanding also entail joint intolerance of that which is intolerable. We may argue endlessly about what constitutes a civilization; however, there must not be any doubt that universal rules and principles apply everywhere. There can be no tolerance and no understanding for those who attack humanity, and there will be no place for them to hide.

The dialogue among civilizations is probably one of the most forward-looking initiatives of the final years of the violent twentieth century. It will be up to us to make wise use of its potential in order to make the twenty-first century an era of openness rather than withdrawal, of respect rather than rejection, and of togetherness rather than alienation.

Mr. Lagumdzija (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a European country that survived an experiment planned to be a clash of civilizations at the end of the twentieth century — it is a special pleasure for me to join you today at the United Nations to contribute to a global agenda for dialogue among civilizations.

Less than 10 years ago, terrorists tried to exploit religion and ethnic identity in order to widen the gap, or build a wall, between "us" and "them", between people whom they considered to be guilty because they were somehow different. For years the international community remained neutral, staying between the local armed forces and trying to protect civilians as much as they were allowed to, but without interfering in the war.

At that time, Slobodan Milosevic was bombing Dubrovnik, a medieval jewel on the Adriatic coast, killing mostly Catholics. Meanwhile, his key henchmen, Radovan Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic, who are under indictment today for war crimes, were keeping Sarajevo besieged and explaining that, by doing so, they were protecting Christianity from Islam in the heart of Europe. No one called them Orthodox terrorists. They were simply among the terrorists who later ended up as war criminals. But when the world united to stop the war, the war ended.

Today, another group of people acting on behalf of Islam in another part of the world are exploiting religion in order to impose their values by terror and crime. Every Bosnian, Muslim and non-Muslim, sharing each other's heritage, knows very well the saying from the Holy Qur'an (*S.5, A.32*)

> "That if anyone slew
> A person ...
> It would be as if
> He slew the whole people."

Solidarity and justice are two very fundamental values that we all believe in, and under which we want to live.

We have to use the tragedy of 11 September 2001 — which was not only a tragedy for America, but also a tragedy for all humankind — as an opportunity to wake up and strike at the very roots of global terrorism — to strike at selfishness and isolationism and at injustice and poverty with new, wider initiatives and agendas. The time has come to have statehood for Palestinians and security for Israelis. Dialogue among civilizations on the local and global levels is the only way to exterminate terrorism.

Coming from Bosnia and Herzegovina, a Balkan country that has experienced a different kind of fundamentalism and faces the problems because of its

multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious nature, I am especially sensitive to terrorism that exploits religious feelings and, by so doing, puts local and global society in jeopardy. For 10 years during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and during the initial years of peace-building and reconstruction of the country, we witnessed how terrorism, religious fundamentalism, nationalism and segregation led to nothing but war criminals, organized crime, poverty and injustice. The fight that we are leading today is a fight against the consequences of poverty, ignorance and injustice.

There is a much bigger task expected of us: to uproot the causes and eliminate the potential focal points of new extremism. Thus we have to support actions targeted against terrorists, but at the same time be more vocal and more action-oriented when we call for quick and massive help for the people of Afghanistan and other related areas with all sorts of humanitarian needs. The war against terrorists is justified, but all of us will be losers if we fail to do everything we can to help innocent people who are suffering today.

I am saying this because I know from my own experience what all this means. After surviving four years of war and 12 difficult surgeries because of being severely wounded — though a civilian — in my home city of Sarajevo, I do not hate anyone. I am only grateful to the people who gave me an opportunity to survive. After personally visiting four capitals in the last three weeks and talking to key European leaders, I am taking the floor here today not to say or ask but — if I may speak metaphorically — to scream to and to beg the Assembly to speed up all kinds of humanitarian help to innocent people who are the victims of their own leadership.

One more dollar, yen or euro that is spent one hour sooner can save some little child who may one day come to this building as a new leader of Afghanistan to speak on behalf of his proud country — someone like the great scientist and reformer Jamal Al-Deen Al-Afghani, who, I am sure, would today promote priorities such as education, freedom, information technologies and the rule of law instead of all the kinds of prohibitions imposed by the Taliban. But it has to be clearly seen that, whatever happens, this is not a war of civilizations. It is a war between civilization and open society, on the one side, and terrorism and tribalism, on the other.

The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina — Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs, Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox — are all united, having chosen together to be on the side of civilization and an open society. We chose to be on the side of dialogue, not on the side of division among civilizations. Our only goal is a multi-religious multi-ethnic, open society, a Bosnia Herzegovina that is an economically sustainable, democratic State, a natural and integral part of a democratic and socially just Europe and world.

This war, a war for civilization and an open society and for the right to be different and to be protected by the rule of law, cannot be won without a new generation of creative and credible leaders, who prove their courage by words and deeds in my country, in Europe and in the world. Let me outline some of the lessons we have learned in the hardest way — from our own experience.

First, when you are confronted with the dilemma of dialogue or division, recognize the dilemma: are you going to build peace or start a war?

Secondly, "our" enemy is not "they" — nations, religions, cultures or races. All of us have a common enemy: poverty and injustice.

Thirdly, if you want to defend yourself and be left in peace, it's not a question of being able to defend yourself, but of being able to defend people around you from yourself.

Fourthly, a civilization confronted with terrorism has no choice. Terrorism and crime have no religion, ethnicity or civilization. Terrorism is the one that chooses war, and civilization has to go into it in order to survive. But civilization has a choice: to save its own soul by helping civilians, using as many resources as it can to strike at terrorism with legitimate force and military action.

Fifthly, you can defeat terrorists and war criminals only with force. People like Karadzic or bin Laden have to be brought to justice. But you cannot build with force. The peace-building process can be made successful only by investing massively in education, building up the institutions of the State, strengthening the economy and ruling by the rule of law, not by the rule of the rulers.

Sixthly, leaders demonstrate courage when they sign peace agreements. People can make peace only if their leaders show creativity while leading credibly by

their own example and communicating their vision to their network of followers who, under that skilful leadership, manage changes in their respective areas of expertise.

Seventhly, dialogue cannot be only in words; it must be in deeds as well, through the five dimensions of the new era: education, ecumenism, environmental responsibility, economy and electronic media.

Finally, allow me to share one powerful learning experience with you, which is a clear example of people's needs, tragedies and dreams today. Almost 10 years ago, when the siege of the city of Sarajevo started, we were all shocked by a live television story about a man in a hospital holding his five-year-old daughter, who had been hit in the head by a sniper while playing in the backyard with her friends. Her only crime was that she was one of "them", that she belonged to — as the killer would probably say — the wrong ethnicity or religion.

The father was holding his daughter in his arms when a journalist asked him: "What would you do to the man who shot your daughter?" Hugging the child, he responded,

> "Nothing, I would like to have coffee with him and to tell him: 'Congratulations, now you made it. You hit a child, hero.' I only hope that her tears will follow him all his life."

Some time ago I saw that same man being asked by the same journalist: "Now that the war is over, would you want real punishment for the sniper shooter? Have you changed your mind?" The answer was clear: "I do not". He continued:

> "Thanks to Almighty God, my daughter recovered by a miracle. A son was born in the meantime, who was also wounded by shrapnel, but he is in good health now as well. My house was destroyed. I have no job, but today the only thing I want is to work, to rebuild my house, to provide my kids with a chance to become educated, to be healthy, to grow up and to love good people. I do not want anyone to experience what I did. Nothing is worth a child's tears."

I am absolutely sure that there can be no reason for even one child's tears. This is why we need a new generation of leaders, to be different from and better than today's leaders. The new generations have to live and grow in a different environment. Our duty is to give them a fair opportunity to create a set of values that will help us envision a world in which there will be fewer children's tears than there are today.

I am sure that the great number of States and organizations represented here today came to show their commitment to a dialogue of words and deeds that can realize our vision of civilizations living in harmony, instead of the nightmare of the clash among civilizations.

I am offering you my country as a place, as a case, as a forum in which dialogue won over division. I am calling on members to come look at us and see, on a small scale, what the future of civilizations looks like. So far, Bosnia and Herzegovina has proved to be the place that rendered the notion of a clash of civilizations null and void and now is on its way to becoming proof that democracy, freedom and respect of human rights are universal.

Mr. Michel (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern Europe countries associated with the European Union — the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election and on the skill with which you have led this session in particularly difficult circumstances.

When we decided to declare 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations we could not have foreseen that this year would remain in peoples' memories primarily as that of the war against terrorism, a kind of terrorism suddenly emerging as one of the major challenges in a globalized world. Those who organized the monstrous attacks of 11 September made a deliberate attempt to spread hatred among peoples and provoke a clash between religions and cultures.

Their hope is undoubtedly to provoke that much-publicized clash between civilizations that was predicted at the end of the cold war. Our debate today should provide further proof that their actions had the opposite effect of what they had hoped for. The overwhelming majority of States represented here have condemned them unreservedly. We have closed ranks; we have expressed our solidarity with the United

States. We have recognized that a legitimate response was necessary, and we have cooperated in setting up an arsenal of measures at the global level to combat terrorism.

We must also — and today's debate provides the ideal opportunity to do this — try to build some foundations for what will doubtless be one of the main projects of the century that has begun: the dialogue among civilizations, which includes and respects the plurality and the diversity of cultures, to bring them together and strengthen them and to expand and strengthen the common bases of universal values. During the Millennium Summit, the heads of State and Government identified freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and the sharing of responsibilities as fundamental values. Therefore, I would like to thank President Khatami, who was behind this initiative, and the Secretary-General for his personal attention to this project.

The tragedy of 11 September, as we all witnessed so vividly, produced a shock wave throughout the world, the breadth of which led us naturally to look into its root causes. As their perpetrators have referred to Islam to justify their acts, some people have seen in these events the beginning of an era ripped apart by violent, passionate and radical confrontation between civilizations.

We wish to condemn outright this talk of division and fear. For us, the terrorist attacks of 11 September are purely negative and hateful acts directed against all of us, with no real distinction between civilizations, cultures and religions. Terrorism is the act of those minorities who wish to impose their plan through terror. It is a phenomenon that is by definition antidemocratic.

But it is not enough to reject this talk and these acts. We must oppose them with action based on a dynamic approach of the modern world and a firmly positive conviction of the universal rules of the society that we wish to establish: rules that assure and guarantee respect for differences, tolerance, dialogue and respect for others. This fight for the human person compels us to promote our common and shared values as a whole. That responds to the spirit of the Secretary-General's speech on the dialogue among civilizations at Salzburg on 28 August 2001.

In that context, it seems to me that we must avoid two dangers. This must be stressed so that there is never confusion between the fight against terrorism and the disloyal fight against some disturbed elements of the opposition. That danger really exists. It is also necessary to take measures so that the fight against terrorism does not affect the level of demand and the democratic nature of our societies.

We must emphasize here that our shared, common values have developed over the course of history. Humanity has developed its ethical traditions in the conviction that human beings are endowed with reason and a moral conscience and that they should treat each other in a fraternal spirit. It is this search for common moral and ethical values that has led to the codification of universal legal standards, which set out today the universal rights designed to protect the dignity of every human being. The United Nations Charter contains a set of values and principles that unite the international community.

This debate, devoted to the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, gives each of us the opportunity to ask ourselves questions. Have we remained faithful to our own cultures and to their underlying values? Has our Western culture been aggressive or at times too dominant because the great majority of mankind sees it close up but does not have access to it? Have not the great cultural debates sometimes appeared as discussions of rich, ethnocentric people who did not understand or who ignored the political, economic, social, cultural and spiritual realities of anything outside the Western world?

The only real answer is clearly dialogue, and today it is a dialogue of cultures, a dialogue among civilizations, which cannot be reduced to a dialogue among religions. What are the principles underlying a true dialogue of cultures? First of all, it is the equal dignity of all cultures and their ability to interpenetrate and enrich each other in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect. The other founding principle, it seems to me, is the need for cultural diversity — the right to difference and identity. This principle is inseparable from the principle that all cultures have equal dignity.

It is from this perspective that the European Union sees dialogue among civilizations. But there should be no taboos. We are duty-bound to ask questions of our own civilization, and we also have the right to ask questions of others. But others also have the right to question us on our civilization and as to

why, for example, certain inequalities exist. If the dialogue among civilizations were reduced to meeting to congratulate one another, this would obviously not be a dialogue.

We need to ask ourselves about the link between culture and politics. Pretentious exaltation and intense cultural preferences can lead to nationalisms of exclusion and rejection. It would be good to recall that while we favour equality of cultures, the culture in question should not be based on identifying signs or characteristics totally incompatible with human dignity or the principles and values that make up our common commitment to humanism, the rule of law and respect for the dignity of others. Having said this, we need to stress the importance, for example, of questioning the links between religion and politics.

The community of nations needs a frank, revitalised, renewed and reinvented dialogue in touch with what is going on in the world. It needs a real dialogue among civilizations that strengthens traditional diplomacy in its role of pursuing ideas and consensuses and thus helps the United Nations in its task of bringing peoples together and fighting all forms of exclusion. This is the only way that we will create a common basis of shared fundamental values for all civilizations.

This dialogue of peoples and cultures means both respect for others and self-respect. Respecting others is first of all wanting to get to know them. This requires an open mind, trust, imagination, a rejection of complacency, moral strength and firmness to resist anything that could imperil freedom and individual rights. No value is the exclusive prerogative of one group, people or culture.

Wanting to know others is also and above all an attempt to know oneself. The dialogue of cultures must be carried on with lucidity and also humility. All of us must examine our own cultures in a spirit of openness and make sure that the dialogue is fruitful. Self-respect is another key element. We must be sure of our own values and ideals in order to start a rich and constructive dialogue. We should also, I think, base such an approach on the conviction that one culture — even if it is founded on intangible ideas — is never a process that is fully completed; on the contrary, it can survive only if it is dynamic and continues to evolve.

In the United Nations system, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is called upon to play a special role in developing the dialogue among cultures. As UNESCO has reminded us, one of the major aims of the dialogue among civilizations is to increase and spread knowledge and appreciation of the historic and cultural bases of societies all over the world. The European Union welcomes the adoption a few days ago, at the thirty-first General Conference of UNESCO, of a declaration on cultural diversity, which opens the way to promotion of these principles.

The aim of the dialogue among civilizations should be to include and integrate. As the World Programme for Dialogue among Civilizations proposes, a major objective will be to promote the inclusion of all people, fairness, equality, justice and tolerance in human interactions. Cultures are different and these differences can never make them superior or inferior to one another. Cultural pluralism and diversity are a source of wealth and a priceless heritage for humankind. The best way to promote mutual understanding and to combat the scourge of intolerance is dialogue.

Cultural diversity is at the very heart of the founding vision of the European Union. The Treaty of Rome establishing the European Community stipulates that:

> "The Community shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore."

Improving knowledge and the disseminating the culture of European peoples was emphasized from the very beginning of European unification.

In its relations with third parties, the European Union is also committed to the promotion of universal values such as human rights or principles underlying democratic rule of law. The European Union attaches great importance to the promotion, by its member States and by civil society and the individuals that make it up, of respect for the intrinsic dignity of human beings and for their rights. We are convinced that promoting these values goes hand in hand with the dialogue among cultures and can only enrich and strengthen it. In this connection, the European Union wishes to affirm the existence of a universal ethic, especially the one that inspired the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This ethic belongs to all

peoples, all nations and all religions. To affirm this universality is to underline the solidarity that links all human beings.

A true dialogue among civilizations will help to reinforce this universal awareness, while rejecting a cultural relativism that would be tantamount to denying both diversity and shared values.

The European Union has followed with great interest the work done by the group of eminent persons designated by the Secretary-General to lead the talks on the prospects of a dialogue among civilizations. Led by his Personal Representative, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, they have marked out the essential milestones for what will be a very long-term project, designed to construct a new paradigm for relations between nations and cultures. We congratulate the group on the remarkable contribution it has made, and we are confident that it will encourage discussion and reflection — in other words, dialogue.

The European Union would like to thank its partners for the constructive spirit that has prevailed during the preparation of the resolution on the draft Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. We hope that the implementation of this programme will receive the attention that it deserves well beyond this year and that this dialogue will be promoted at all levels: local, national, regional and international. The Union would like to point out here that it has been conducting an extremely diversified dialogue for a long time now with a great many countries and regional groups.

The dialogue among civilizations is an innovative facet of the permanent dialogue that has been conducted within the United Nations since it founded. The European Union hopes that this tool will reinforce the work for peace and bringing peoples together that the United Nations has accomplished, work that has recently earned it the Nobel Peace Prize. By participating actively, the Union hopes to contribute towards the emergence of a more harmonious, tolerant and just world.

Ms. Ratsifandriamanana (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): We are gathered again in the General Assembly Hall, in the very heart of New York, which is still traumatized, as we all are, by the memory of the massacre of 11 September. New York is a crossroads of cultural diversity, a cosmopolitan city where the most varied civilizations coexist.

On behalf of the Madagascar delegation, I wish to reiterate our words of salutation and homage to you, Mr. Han Seung-soo, President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, which is full of so many challenges and expectations; and to your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, who during his term of office led the Millennium Assembly. We are proud that our Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize he so deserved. That honour expressed the confidence of the whole world in our Organization.

We have nearly reached the end of the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and we would now like to take stock of the Year and to outline the way forward. We are grateful to President Khatami of the Islamic Republic of Iran for having taken the initiative. We are also grateful to the Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, for his commendable contribution. Several States and international organizations, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and several non-governmental organizations and academic institutions have come together to make a reality of the noble resolution 53/22, adopted on 4 November 1998.

Madagascar subscribes to the Millennium Declaration's provisions regarding the aspirations of the peoples of the world to work for peace and on dialogue among civilizations. Madagascar supported and co-sponsored resolution 55/254, on the protection of religious sites. My country welcomes the launching of the book entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*.

Furthermore, we very much appreciate the establishment of the United Nations trust fund for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We strongly support the recommendations of the Salzburg meeting, held in August 2001, on dialogue among civilizations as a new paradigm of international relations. Likewise, we enthusiastically welcome the International UNESCO Conference on cultural policy as a global task.

Madagascar is one of the African countries that celebrated the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. A discussion workshop was organized from 10 to 12 October, with the participation of leaders of State and academic institutions and civil society, national and international experts, and political and religious

leaders. The main themes discussed were the promotion of diversity, tolerance, interdependence, rethinking the concepts of enemy and defence at the dawn of the third millennium, identifying the responsibility of international political actors and thinking about dialogue and poverty eradication. It is a pleasure for me to share with the Assembly the main points that emerged from that gathering.

The first point is the use of dialogue in order to rethink the concept of enemy. Enemy today has a global, international and collective character. A global enemy can be, for example, poverty, AIDS, terrorism or global warming. An international enemy attacks all countries, rich and poor, without discrimination. It can be a collective enemy, because no country can remain indifferent to it, and our struggle against it becomes a joint struggle. Our response also has to be global, international and collective, based on an awareness of the interdependence of nations, the need for international solidarity and the urgent need for an ongoing multidirectional dialogue. Clearly, a new defence strategy resulting from global dialogue must be worked out under the aegis of the United Nations.

In order to make the enemy an adversary, let us first create circumstances conducive to an exchange of ideas and to mutual understanding. Then, to make the adversary a partner, let us establish a climate of cooperation in order to provide a common framework for action. Finally, in order to make the partner a friend, let us have interactive communication in a climate of real trust.

The second point is to engage in dialogue in order to promote the well-being of peoples. Dialogue will become an instrument for positive, peaceful and pragmatic action for sustainable human development, a support system for strategies to combat poverty and scourges of all kinds. Dialogue remains an agent of reconciliation, opening up, harmony and appreciation of diversity. Dialogue is a catalyst for cultural integration at various levels. Traditional values could be reference points for creating a system of behaviour leading to peace, for strengthening the links among countries and for encouraging respect for human rights.

The third point is to use dialogue as a means of active expression. The President of the Republic of Madagascar, Mr. Didier Ratsiraka, has proposed a non-aggression pact at the national level among the religious institutions of our country in order to pre-empt the risk of a clash of religions or schools of thought. We must have the courage to denounce the excesses of ideological fanaticism and extremism, which do damage to our shared principles. Any dialogue requires preparation. We must start learning to dialogue, because there are several ways to dialogue, depending on the situations, sensitivities and needs involved.

A universal manual of procedures for conducting dialogue should be worked out to serve as a common reference tool or guidepost to avoid awkward communication. The risk of radical reactions could thus be avoided.

With regard to the access of developing countries to new information and communication technologies and to different linguistic systems, greater support is required on the part of the developed countries in order to narrow the gap and to overcome the communication divide among nations. Mobility programmes for people from one country to another should be extended within the United Nations, like those that have already been initiated by various regional groups and countries.

There can be no successful dialogue so long as the culture of peace and openness, which is so often mentioned, remains divorced from daily realities; so long as frustrations of all sorts, intolerance and destitution persist; and so long as the excellent resolutions adopted in this Hall are not accompanied by concrete action. On the basis of this conviction, we approve the United Nations programme for the dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. Ismail (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to extend to you, Sir, my congratulations on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. We also thank your predecessor, Mr. Harri Holkeri, for his efforts in making the fifty-fifth session a success. We extend our appreciation to the staff of your office. We are fully confident that, with your wisdom and expertise, you will lead us to the results to which we all aspire.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the report of the Secretary-General in document A/56/523, under agenda item 25, "United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". We commend the efforts of Mr. Giandomenico Picco, the personal representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. We also commend the important role played by the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and by other academic and scientific institutions, and we look forward to working further in this area and to intensifying our efforts to encourage exchanges of views and interaction between all sectors and individuals, Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, researchers, thinkers and artists from all cultures and civilizations.

In this regard, we salute the publication of the book entitled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, to which the personal representative of the Secretary-General, in cooperation with UNESCO, and other eminent persons and thinkers from various cultural backgrounds have contributed. We believe that this represents a real beginning in the setting of joint solid foundations for an exchange of views and expertise to reach a better understanding that will give us an objective and meaningful dialogue among civilizations. We also commend the Islamic Republic of Iran for preparing the draft global agenda for dialogue among civilizations.

Islam is based on the unity of humankind arising from the roots of belief and from the faith that we all share the same origin and that the family of Abraham includes all humankind; that common human nature undoubtedly unifies all cultures and civilizations; and that cultural heritages belong to all humankind. On the basis of these concepts, human relations are formulated through interaction and positive cooperation to populate and develop our planet and to enjoy its fruits in solidarity and harmony. This demonstrates that all people are equal, free and partners. It also leads to peaceful coexistence and the meeting of civilizations in which pluralism is a source of power. Dialogue is thus all the more important in promoting human behaviour that rejects the standards of materialism and their influence. It also contributes to the creation of common working methods; the preservation of traditions and respect for the choices of others, thus promoting the spirit of peaceful coexistence among cultures, deepening interaction between them and weakening the desire for hegemony and cultural exclusion.

The dialogue among religions, a very important matter in Sudan's policies in international affairs, has reached a very advanced stage, as attested to by the international conference on dialogue among religions organized by Sudan in November 2000, which, because of its fruitful results, may serve as a model for religious leaders, particularly those from the West. The conference exemplifies efforts made by Sudan that could be generally extended to areas of dialogue on the basis of specific principles in the search, first, for a joint language for dialogue and then for mutual recognition of the specificities of each culture, rejecting the legacies of past conflicts, addressing primary issues and shunning marginal ones and developing a clear vision for the future.

Sudan submitted a draft resolution to the Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Havana in April 2001, calling for the establishment of an international forum for dialogue among cultures, civilizations and religions in order to promote peace, security and stability, lessen the intensity of conflicts and wars throughout the world, achieve consensus on a minimal level of mutual respect and exploit this positive atmosphere in service of the international community. The Conference accepted this initiative and decided to engage a dialogue among cultures in addressing international issues. This is a propitious forum for orchestrating a coordinated effort to promote the values of dialogue.

In calling for a tolerant and humane world in which the culture of peace prevails, we urge peoples of diverse cultures to reject the propagation of erroneous concepts that could have very grave consequences, as some have predicted, with respect to a possible clash of civilizations in which certain cultures consider themselves superior to others in terms of race, religion and thought. Such a catastrophe would be further aggravated if the leaders and eminent persons of those societies were to embrace such claims, the results of which would be disastrous to the stability of humankind.

Agreement that there are specific issues that highlight the presence of dispute and divergence of view is the first requirement for the success of any process of dialogue. It is clear that the current clash of cultures in the international community has come about because certain problems were exacerbated to such an extent that military confrontation resulted. At other times, such problems might subside and the results would be mere statements of concern.

Our main areas of disagreement relate to important issues, the most prominent of which concern human rights, democracy, religion, values, the global economy and the culture of gender. These issues need

to be addressed with a great deal of transparency; acculturation is much more important than self-centred interest in one's own culture. This leads us to a number of conclusions, which we must accept if we are to engage in fruitful and results-oriented dialogue.

The erroneous concepts of human rights held by some but not by others, and the problems that these concepts entail in the international community — this means that we must undertake a dialogue to understand the particulars of each culture so as to ensure that there is no unilateral concept of human rights. There is divergence among cultures concerning the concept of democracy. Different cultures agree that the freedom of the individual is the basis of political practice; the disagreement relates to the degree of this freedom. This disagreement requires us to start a real and constructive dialogue to understand the basis and the dimensions of each culture so as to prevent conflict and misunderstanding. Safeguarding fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of worship, freedom of belief and freedom of association, must be promoted and placed in the appropriate context in conformity with international covenants. We would like to refer here to the Millennium Declaration, which affirms the importance of fundamental principles on which international relations should be based.

We should all note the importance of spirituality in establishing noble values and in affirming that freedom of belief and of worship should not be a matter of dispute or of conflict among civilizations. In this context we value the daring initiative taken by Prince Charles to cross the divide between Islamic and Western cultures on the basis of his understanding of the importance of dialogue in dispelling tendencies towards intolerance.

The economic concept of globalization has become a reality from which there is no escape. The developed countries have coped with the requirements of globalization, but the developing and the least developed countries have not done so. An economic dialogue of civilizations should therefore begin by exploring the unjust disparities between rich and poor throughout the world, inasmuch as 20 per cent of the population of the world owns 80 per cent of its wealth.

Dialogue should explore areas for possible cooperation in order to reduce the distance between the two worlds. It is clear that the rich world has not fulfilled its responsibilities, given the poverty, disease and ignorance from which the poor world is still suffering. The impact of poverty cuts across the boundaries of the rich nations; the whole world has become subject to the two forces of influencing and being influenced; it is a world that is becoming smaller and smaller every day.

In this context, the debt burden is a terrible nightmare. In addition to reflecting the injustices of the rich and the complaints of the poor, it embodies a structural imbalance in the global economic system. In the dialogue on the debt burden, therefore, we should go beyond debt cancellation and rescheduling and take a daring step forward on the basis of a just partnership for development, preserving the rights of creditors while allowing the debtor countries not merely to pay off their debts but also to make active investments.

The tragic events of 11 September and the current international situation makes the idea of dialogue among cultures and civilizations a priority. Were it not for the determination of some rational people not to link Islam to these events, the biased mass media coverage would have led to a catastrophe that would have had negative repercussions on the idea of dialogue among civilizations. These tragic events serve as a starting-point for an open, fruitful and constructive dialogue among civilizations. These tragic events serve as a starting point for a fruitful dialogue between civilizations for the benefit of the whole of humanity.

A religion such as Islam that calls upon the faithful to believe in all heavenly messengers and holy scriptures cannot be called intolerant. A religion that calls upon believers to salute peacefully people whom they know or do not know, and to provide refuge to anybody who asks, whatever the hostility and differences between them, cannot be described as a religion of terrorism. A religion that sends people to hell because they have not fed a pet, and to heaven for giving a drink to a thirsty dog, cannot be considered a religion that violates human rights. A religion that calls upon believers to show the right path of God with wisdom and good advice cannot be called intolerant or seen as rejecting dialogue.

Despite the tragic events and the conflicts that the world has witnessed since the beginning of history, we, as human beings at the beginning of the twenty-first century, must call for tolerance, non-violence and coexistence in peace and security. The world today has benefited from amazing developments in the economic

and industrial spheres; it has become a small global village as a result of the advance of science and technology. We should mobilize all these benefits so as to ensure constructive interaction between different cultures, with all their different religions and beliefs — whatever their manifestations — thereby embodying the lofty purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for justice, social development and tolerance and for peace and good neighbourly-relations.

In conclusion, my delegation has sponsored the draft resolution "Global agenda for dialogue among civilizations" — a basic building block for very important work for the benefit of humanity. This will require all delegations to make an effort to ensure a firm basis for a new world of harmony, peace, justice, tolerance, brotherliness and equality.

Mr. Rojas López (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to begin by congratulating Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his Personal Representative for the United Nations International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, Mr. Giandomenico Picco, on their excellent work to organize this dialogue. I also wish to thank the Islamic Republic of Iran for its tireless commitment to, and interest in, this subject. Likewise, I would like to express my gratitude to the Group of Eminent Persons for its valuable work to establish the conceptual basis of this meeting.

The General Assembly's initiative to proclaim this year the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations is unquestionably one of the most important acts undertaken by the Organization to achieve peace in the world. Dialogue is undoubtedly the best way for us to understand one another. In a world with a variety of cultures and beliefs, it is dialogue that makes it possible to build bridges of understanding and to achieve harmony on the basis of our common humanity. We must avoid ignorance, which many times is the origin of fear and conflict.

Clearly, this dialogue is taking place in a new and unforeseen global context. The whole of humankind witnessed with disbelief and horror the terrorist attack carried out in the city of New York on 11 September 2001. The consequences of that attack have had an impact on major current developments. The world has not been the same since then, and will never be the same again.

The current war on terrorism should not mean a confrontation among civilizations; nor should it mean a confrontation between religions, since, at their core, all religions share a similar message of respect and tolerance towards others. It should definitely not be interpreted as a conflict of values. The struggle against terrorism and the dialogue among civilizations presuppose the essential need for all human beings to be able to enjoy the same potential for human development. Diversity in belief, culture, language, religion, history and even economic systems should not drive humankind towards intolerance. On the contrary, those apparent differences can become a valuable source of enrichment, complementarity and solidarity.

We should ask ourselves what prompts people to turn the terror and suffering of others into a way of life. How can we explain the fact that human beings should acquire such great contempt for their fellows that they have no qualms about killing thousands of people, or sometimes even revel in it?

One of the elements of the comprehensive fight against terrorism is combating poverty. Given that poverty provides a breeding ground for ignorance, resentment and fanaticism, it is clear that this factor must be taken into account. In this regard, international solidarity between rich and poor countries is of key importance. Industrialized countries should make a greater effort to fulfil the commitment to devote a minimum of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to international cooperation. Likewise, that solidarity should also be reflected in international trade so that the products of developing countries can be purchased at fair prices that are not undermined by unfair trading practices, which in the end always affect the poorest.

However, it is also clear that terrorism does not boil down to a problem of poverty or economic exclusion alone. It is well known that many of the individuals who have joined terrorist groups, including some European groups, and their top leaders were raised in well-to-do families and have had access to excellent educations. Indeed, many of them have for years lived in the United States or in Europe, and have therefore been exposed to the Western way of life and culture. Even so, they have clung to their ideology of terror. Neither poverty nor ignorance can explain that.

For those reasons it would appear that we need to look for the causes of terrorism at a deeper level in the human psyche. I am no specialist in this respect, but I

have the impression that one key element is to be found in intolerance and an inability to understand others — in other words, in profound self-centredness.

The call for the dialogue among civilizations to focus on changing the mentality that perceives diversity as a threat is particularly important, as is the development of a new paradigm of international relations based on such a change in mentality. I would also add the importance of overcoming the mentality that considers one's own ideological, philosophical and religious beliefs as the only valid ones. This is the essence of tolerance, a vital prerequisite for being able to carry out a dialogue among civilizations.

From among the various points that Mr. Picco makes, I would like to refer to two in particular: reassessing our concept of the enemy and the development of individual responsibility in international relations. Clearly, one consequence of the attacks of 11 September is a new pattern of international politics. A bridge has been built between former rivals, and a global threat has been identified, calling for the concerted efforts of all States and individuals. Unfortunately for the terrorists, rather than sparking conflict among civilizations, the attacks of 11 September have reinforced the unity of the global civilization in opposing and combating this scourge.

This newly emerged phase of global civilization has a number of distinctive features. Notwithstanding our cultural, political, ethnic or racial differences, we all share respect for human life, a love of freedom and a commitment to pass on to our children a better world. This set of beliefs is without question the doctrine of human rights. Respect for human rights is, in the final analysis, the first global ethic that humankind has developed. This is precisely the global ethic to which the Group of Eminent Persons refers at the end of the executive summary of its publication, and it should serve as the basis for the dialogue among civilizations. Accordingly, one fundamental task that humankind must face is to continue to bolster the doctrine of human rights and, above all, to strengthen effective ways and means of promoting and protecting them.

The call to strengthen multilateral responsibility in international relations is a key point. Tolerance must prevail over lack of understanding among cultures. Our deepest sense of love for humanity must prevail over gestures of contempt for life. These are the values that should characterize the global civilization of the twenty-first century.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.